

Cllr Bunt Waters Notes – Parish Council October 2023

DISTRICT COUNCIL FOUR DAY WORKING WEEK

It has been revealed that an 'independent' report on the 4-day working week trial at South Cambs District Council had been edited by council officers ahead of its release. The true report shows a very different picture to the governing group's previous optimism.

The Bennett Institute's independent report on the 4-day week has been repeatedly cited as evidence that the 4-day week trial for 450 desk-based staff in South Cambs is working. But it has now become public knowledge that this 'independent' report was tampered with before its release – artificially improving the results of the 4-day week.

Quotes from managing officers at the council that were removed from the report suggest the 4-day week has in fact been highly damaging. One manager said they "did all the unfinished work on my day off so that my team could have time off. It had a very negative impact on my wellbeing."

Most managers felt that there was "envy" between workers. The report states: "Those who have Mondays off complained that they find it harder to start the week on Tuesday than those who have Fridays off". The report continues: "On the other hand, those who have Fridays off feel that they are under pressure to get things done quickly before they are closed. And then when they come on Monday, there are not many people, and they have to postpone the meetings until Tuesday."

All this negativity makes a grim reading for the council's governing group – whose leadership means the council is unable to properly serve residents and elected councillors. A quote from one councillor – also removed from the report – said: "I have emailed some people at least three times and received no response." This is perhaps because, according to one manager, "we don't always have to deliver perfect work and that's okay."

This is highly concerning for councillors and residents alike. Not only has the 4-day week inflicted damage on council services – the leadership's decisions have been an act of self-harm to the reputation of the council.

This story has been reported several times in the national media, including The Times www.thetimes.co.uk/article/four-day-week-report-edited-by-council-leader-to-make-it-more-positive-5lmqb88l3 and the BBC www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cambridgeshire-66923646.

CONGESTION CHARGING CONTINUES TO BE RAISED

At the most recent meeting of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, "road charging" was yet again raised for a debate and vote as part of the Local Transport Plan. This was despite leading politicians saying the proposed £5 per day Cambridge congestion charge would be taken off the table at the beginning of September.

The Plan was not approved by the Combined Authority as Peterborough Authority essentially had a veto. But road charging is still a contentious political issue in Cambridgeshire. The South Cambs representative at the Combined Authority meeting was clear that all options including road charging needed to be on the table and that there did need to be restrictions on cars. I have voted against all forms of road charging and will continue to campaign against it. I do not believe putting extra financial pressure on working people is appropriate, especially in the current climate.

FLY TIPPING

South Cambridgeshire District Council receives around 1,600 reports per year regarding fly tipping. The Council is urging residents to do the right thing and properly get rid of their rubbish in the following ways:

- Giving it away for free on Facebook marketplace, Gumtree or taking to a local charity shop.
- If possible, reuse, repair or recycle items before getting rid of them.
- Be sure to choose a reputable registered waste carrier disposal service.
- South Cambridgeshire District Council can arrange for collection of bulky items for many common household goods. It collects a maximum of nine items per collection. Up to three items can be booked for the minimum charge of £32.50. Additional items are then £5.50 each.
- Take additional rubbish to one of Cambridgeshire's Household Recycling Centres.

Anyone who sees fly tipping should report it via:

www.scambs.gov.uk/recycling-and-bins/report-or-request/report-environmental-issues/

FOOD WASTE BAGS

I have a couple of packs of 50 Food Waste Bags which I collected from South Cambs, they go in caddys. They are £4.50 if anyone would like a pack just contact me.

Pledge to Fight Food Waste and win! In South Cambridgeshire, around a third of waste put into black bins is food that could have been eaten. The Fight Food Waste campaign supports people to adopt simple habits that help to save food from the bin. Every month until December, you can pledge to fight food waste in a different way and receive weekly support and tips to help you stick to it. There will also be a monthly prize draw where one participant will win a £60 food voucher. This is the average amount a family wastes each month on food which goes in the bin. Find out more and make your pledge at www.recap.co.uk/pledge-to-fightfood-waste

Thank you for taking the time to read my report; if you have any questions or want to discuss any issues email me on bunty.waters@ntlworld.com or ring 07734690580
Cllr Bunty Waters